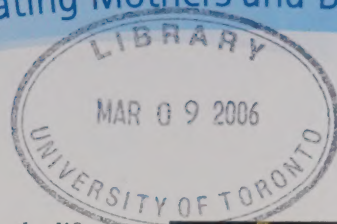


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# CANADA PRENATAL NUTRITION PROGRAM CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

Communities Celebrating Mothers and Babies



*I want to tell you a story about a child that grew strong and healthy. You see the child started like a seed. But instead of growing in mother earth, the child grew in the protective place of his mother's womb. This mom ate food from the land, and the child came into this world healthy and strong. Through the love and support of his family and community, the child continues to grow. And each year on his birthday, they celebrate.*

*Families and communities celebrate a child's growth and development. In the same way, we celebrate the growth of the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program. It is now 10 years old. This story is about more than 9000 First Nations and Inuit women from over 600 communities who take part each year.<sup>1</sup> In this program, women grow stronger in nourishing themselves and their children. And they draw strength from each other. We want to tell you more about this program.*

Women are the life-givers to the children within the womb. The food each woman eats provides nutrition for her growing baby. The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program focuses on:



- building knowledge and skills about healthy eating
- providing healthy foods
- giving breastfeeding information and support



<sup>1</sup> These numbers are for the part of the program that is funded by the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada. Many thousands of non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal women who live off reserve also take part in another stream of the program. It is funded through the Public Health Agency of Canada.



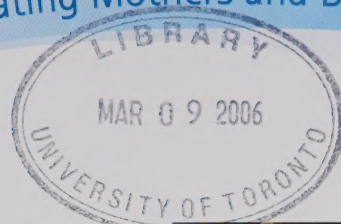




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Each First Nations and Inuit community decides on activities for the program. This means there are lots of differences between communities. But here are some of the most common examples of program activities.

## Making meals together

One way that women learn about healthy eating is through cooking groups and making meals together. Women learn and share ideas about how to best nourish themselves and their babies. Elders often teach how to prepare traditional foods.

**"I learned how well I am eating for me and my baby and I learned what to eat more often."**

Woman from  
Saulteaux First Nation,  
Saskatchewan



## Shopping together

Sometimes women go to stores together. They talk about how to choose foods that are healthy and cost less.



**"I learned to know good prices, and about keeping a good diet, and healthy foods and how to stay in shape."**

Woman from  
Mosquito First Nation,  
Saskatchewan

## Working together to make food available

Sometimes it's hard to get the right kinds of foods. Maybe the store doesn't have them. Or maybe they cost a lot. First Nations and Inuit communities might do different things to help women eat well. For example, one First Nations community in Manitoba helps people grow their own vegetables.

In an Inuit community in Nunavut, hunters get traditional food for cooking classes.

**"In partnership ... we plowed 70 gardens and are assisting community members with maintaining them."**

Fort Alexander Health  
Centre, Manitoba

**"We are able to get traditional food by having hunters go out and harvest the game for us."**

Program worker from  
Kitikmeot Region,  
Nunavut



## One-on-one information and support

As well as group activities, there can be one-on-one talks with a program worker. This may happen in a health centre or in the woman's home.

**"A lot of new moms say that the information they get helps a lot."**

Labrador Inuit  
Health Commission,  
Newfoundland and  
Labrador

## Women know more about breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the traditional way to feed babies. Within the program, women can find out more about breastfeeding. They get support to breastfeed successfully.



**"One prenatal [woman] received info at prenatal class regarding the benefits of breastfeeding and changed her mind [and decided] to breastfeed."**

Program worker from Mount  
Currie, British Columbia.



## Other activities

Lots of other great things happen in the program. Some of these are:

- making baby food
- learning from each other in sharing circles
- exercising in groups
- sewing and making traditional crafts such as moccasins or moss bags

**"The baby food workshop is always a favorite, it's the most popular activity of the program."**

Program worker from  
Cree First Nation,  
Quebec





## When did the program start?

The Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program started in communities in 1995. Its purpose is to improve the health of women and their babies in Canada. There are two 'streams' of the program. The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada funds the program for First Nations and Inuit women living on reserve and within the territories. The Public Health Agency of Canada funds the program for non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal women living off reserve.

"I truly believe if we are going to make a difference in the health and well being of our people, it has to start during pregnancy with a focus on life long healthy lifestyles."

Opaskwayak Health Authority,  
Manitoba

"I'm very thankful for this program and for the staff who look out for the moms. *Quyanainni!*"

Woman from Sachs  
Harbour, Northwest  
Territories

## What difference does the program make?

"[There is] an increased awareness of the importance of a healthy diet during pregnancy."

Program worker from  
Nunavik, Quebec

### Healthy Eating

Women learn more and get skills for healthy eating. Inuit communities found that only about 1 out of 4 women who came to the program ate enough healthy food. After being in the program, 3 out of 4 had enough healthy food.

### Breastfeeding

More women are breastfeeding. About 8 out of every 10 women in the program breastfeed their babies. Women are also breastfeeding for a longer time than they might have without the program.

"A new mother told me that the lactation consultant [a breastfeeding expert] spent time with her helping her work through her breastfeeding problems. The mother stated that she would have given up on breastfeeding without the help of the lactation consultant."

Program worker from Alberta

### Healthier Birth Weights

Program workers report that women who take part in the program are more likely to have a baby with a healthy birthweight.

Our Mission is to help the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.

Health Canada

This publication can also be made available in/on computer diskette/large print/audio-cassette/Braille upon request.

Également offert en français sous le titre: Le Programme canadien de nutrition prénatale célèbre son 10<sup>e</sup> anniversaire.

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Catalogue No.: H34-133/2005E  
ISBN: 0-662-41248-6  
Publication No.: 3053



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